The Southern PATRIOT

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Southwest Rally Ars Integration

The Southwestern Conference on Integration held in Houston, Tex., on May 17 provided a forum for an impressive exchange of opinion by an outstanding group of Southerners.

Delegates gathering at the Downtown Branch of the YWCA were extended warm and witty greetings to the city by Gould Beech, executive assistant to the mayor.

After an invocation by the Rev. J. Paul Stevens, field secretary of the Presbyterian Church, USA, of Denton, Tex., the Rev. Robert E. Hayes stated the purpose of the assembly. Reverend Hayes is executive secretary to the board of education, Texas conference of the Methodist Church.

Dr. Rupert C. Koeninger, chairman of the department of sociology, Sam Houston State College, then discussed "The First Year of Integration." (An excerpt of his address is published elsewhere in this issue.)

Commissions then formed for study of integration in all its aspects. The reports of these groups will be presented in the June **Patriot.**

Aubrey Williams, president of the SCEF, acted as moderator at the evening forum on "What are some of the problems of segregation and how can they be solved?" Participants were James S. Carter, principal, Phoenix Union High School, Phoenix, Ariz.; W. N. Sellman, assistant superintendent of schools, St. Louis, Mo.; W. W. Trent, state superintendent of free schools, West Virginia, and Dr. William J. L. Wallace, president of West Virginia State College. Excerpts from their addresses appear in this issue.

Mrs. Lula B. White and Robert Childers were in charge of arrangements for the conference.

'Local School Board Can Tip Balance'

Dr. Rupert C. Koeninger, chairman of the department of sociology at Sam Houston State College, Huntsville, Tex., delivered the keynote address: "The First Year of Integration." The following is an excerpt.

In this first year of integration we have had ample cases to indicate that desegregation is an uneven, shifting proc-

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Panelists Trent, Sellman, Carter, Wallace and Moderator Williams.

'Effective Integration Will Silence Foes'

Resolution unanimously adopted by delegates to the Southwest Conference on Integration in the Public Schools.

The record of progress toward integration in the public schools within one year after the Supreme Court decision provides proof and inspiration to all who believe in the democratic process.

This meeting has heard the testimony of school leaders from sectors of the Southwest where white and Negro children now grow and learn together in peaceful fraternity. We urge that forward-looking citizens of every community use their good influences to promote further and immediate progress in this direction.

Last month representatives of various states where segregation exists pleaded for years of immunity to the court's decree, arguing that attitudes cannot be changed overnight. These briefs did not indicate how the delay would be used to change this alleged hostile public opinion. The experience of Arizona, Kansas, Missouri, West Virginia, Washington, D. C., and Baltimore, Md. where integration was established is substantial proof of the feasibility of carrying out the decision of the Supreme Court without delay.

We do not believe that the people of the present-day, progressive South feel themselves obliged to retain a system that is long outdated. Where there is great hostility expressed toward integration, we feel that integration itself, once put into effect, will win over its foes by its obvious blessings.

There is no way that time in itself, however long an interval, can remedy an evil. Only through constructive action can equity prevail. Segregation has proved itself socially, an evil; politically, undemocratic; economically, a waste; religiously, a sin. It must be met immediately on all these levels. This is the spirit behind the initial Supreme Court decision, and the formula for implementation must be accepted in that spirit.

This Conference, assembled in Houston, Texas, this May 17th, 1955, the first anniversary of the Supreme Court decision on integration, following the democratic American tradition, resolves that it favors the prompt implementation of the Supreme Court decision concerning integration in the public schools and its subsequent decrees.

IN PHOENIX: FAIRNESS, IMPARTIALITY SOLVED PROBLEM

James S. Carter, principal of Phoenix Union High School in Phoenix, Ariz., traced the history of school segregation in his state, and the results when integration went into effect in 1953. The following excerpt from his very scholarly presentation tells of the acceptance of Negro students and teachers at Phoenix Union, largest in the city.

In 1953 the Phoenix Board of Education made it possible for Negro students to attend voluntarily the high school in the attendance area of the district in which they lived. Approximately 120 Negroes enrolled in Phoenix Union High School and 12 in Phoenix Southmountain High School. A few had been enrolling at Phoenix Technical School over the years.

Disciplinary problems involved the usual 1 to 2 per cent of these students. Of the 67 suspensions for all students during the course of the school year, 10.4 per cent were Negro students.

Throughout the 1953-54 school year Negro students entered into our school life at Phoenix Union with only minor complications. They were accepted into all of the extra-curricular activities, a number of them participating in the athletic program.

At the first student body dance of the sports season, Negro students were restricted from dancing outside their group, following a precedent established and followed at the Phoenix Technical School in prior years, and by order of the Superintendent. This caused considerable feeling among the fifteen or twenty Negro students who were in attendance that night. Later this order was rescinded and they were given the same rights and privileges at sports dances as all the other students—freedom to make a choice—the right to be accepted or rejected. Very few cases of mixed dancing, however, have occurred in the past two years.

The solution was simple. You have to give all students the same rights and privileges. They feel that fairness, impartiality, and non-discrimination are essential. Furthermore, it is not up to school officials to impose discriminating restrictions. If the parents of a boy or girl do not want their son or daughter to dance with a Negro girl or boy, it is the responsibility of the parents so to instruct their children or to forbid them to attend school dances. This was the only conclusion that could be made that seemed fair and impartial.

The Negro students who came voluntarily to Phoenix Union at the beginning of the 1953-54 school year seem to be considerably better adjusted during this school year, 1954-55. They have made friends among students of other races. They have become more at home, feeling that Phoenix Union is their school. This is true particularly with those Negroes who entered Phoenix Union directly from the eighth grades last year.

The Negro students, freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, who attended Carver High School (for Negroes) last year, and who had to enroll at Phoenix Union this year, because Carver was closed, have shown varying degrees of adjustment.

Many of the Negroes entering Phoenix Union had never associated with white boys and girls. Their economic and social conditions, their environment, their personal feelings of being rejected because of their color, etc.—all entered into the picture.

They were required to give up their separate high school, their feeling of unity, their color bond, their Negro teachers, etc. They had their own fine athletic teams, their teams being consistent winners of district and state athletic championships in their school's class. They had their own band, glee clubs, plays, P.T.A., etc.

Having to enroll in a predominantly white school which had its own 60 years of traditions, when they were not certain how they would be accepted would be cause for uneasiness.

The great majority of white boys and girls who had been attending Phoenix Union quickly helped to allay such fears by accepting them as fellow students. And teachers and counselors helped greatly.

The attendance record of Negroes has been worse than other students . . . The necessity of having to work, earn money for clothes, and help their families financially are the reasons for this. An outstanding Negro educator told the author that many Negro parents were "spending over their heads" in order to provide good school clothes for sons and daughters attending high school. Why many of the Negro fathers and mothers can find and hold down only jobs paying little towards a decent standard of living is a problem not yet solved.

The Negro boys have assisted our teams greatly this year. We have been fair and impartial in making team player assignments.

At the first of the football season there was some feeling on the part of white athletes toward Negro transfers from Carver. Some of the white boys who had expected to play first string were beaten out by Negro boys. However, by mid-season this feeling had disappeared. Both had become adjusted to one another. The white boys began to appreciate the skill, stamina, cooperation, and desire-to-win spirit for Phoenix Union that the Negroes displayed. A

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Keynote Speech

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ess, not a sudden massive change. The change may be slow or fast depending on whether it is resisted or welcomed.

Initial reactions within the United States to the decision of the Supreme Court were generally rather matter of fact. Those who approved were restrained in their praise of the decision, recognizing that many years might elapse before desegregation became integration; many of those who opposed desegregation accepted the decision as a fact that had to be recognized, while warning that in many communities implementation would be a long process.

A conclusion we may draw from the first year of integration is that where the white community is not strongly opposed—or where attitudes are unstructured and in a state of flux—decisive importance attaches to the policies and actions of the school boards and school officials. Those gatekeepers can tip the balance one way or the other and affect the ease or difficulty of transition. In Delaware, where the Milford board reversed its decision, trouble grew; but in Washington, D. C., where the superintendent stated the policy clearly and unmistakably, trouble did not develop.

It is a trait of human nature to play by ear in new social situations; we are sensitive to cues as to what is appropriate and acceptable behavior. Therefore it is important that statements of policy be made very early and clearly, and once made followed.

MARY McLEOD BETHUNE

Mary McLeod Bethune's life exemplified the moral of one of her favorite stories. Often, from the speaker's rostrum, would she tell of a wonderful garden filled with roses. There were pink roses, red roses, white roses, yellow roses—and, adding its own luster and crowning the beautiful blend of contrasts, a black rose.

Mrs. Bethune was such a rose. She sprang from the harshest of soil to become an unfading symbol of hope and encouragement to all the South.

She was one of the SCEF's staunchest supporters. Her efforts did much to build the organization; her memory will guide its future growth.

PICTURE OF AUDIENCE AT SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE ON INTEGRATION, HOUSTON, MAY 17

NEGRO COLLEGE INTEGRATES, RENDERS GREATER SERVICE

Dr. William J. L. Wallace, president of West Virginia State College, related how white students were received at his institution, where formerly the student body had been restricted to Negroes. Dr. Wallace, a noted chemist, is a board member of the SCEF.

For a number of years many citizens of West Virginia of the white race have been interested in the educational program of West Virginia State College. Indeed, there were some applicants for admission. From time to time it was rumored that the college was attended by white students. For a number of years the college had an interracial staff. This movement began with the acceptance of a refugee scholar as professor of German and later another refugee scholar as head of the department of business administration. Since that time other persons have been added to the staff.

Thus, West Virginia State College was in an excellent position for the process of integration when, on June 9, 1954, the criterion of race was eliminated for admittance to the colleges under the West Virginia Board of Education. Immediately following the announcement of the policy, the administrative officers of the college received numerous telephone inquiries about the courses of studies offered.

One of the first decisions of importance to be made involved recruitment. We decided that the wisest policy to follow would involve no recruitment steps among white high school graduates. It was thought best to wait and see what the acceptance of the college would be. This would, in a sense, avoid antagonizing some persons who might be yet doubtful of the wisdom of the process of integration.

In spite of the many inquiries and seemingly great interest in the college, we were considerably surprised at the number of white students who enrolled at the college in September, 1954. One of the reasons that 182 students were able to enroll was the willingness of instructors at the college to arrange night classes for persons who had daytime jobs.

For the most part the process of integration has proceeded harmoniously and smoothly. This is the hoped-for result. We felt that if students chose West Virginia State College there should be little or no feeling of antagonism on their part. Many persons, however, feared the reaction of the Negro students who have come to accept the college as their own. No doubt there were some persons who resented the appearance of white students on the campus.

However, I undertook a survey of the reactions of students from West Virginia and found no one student who expressed opposition. There were some out-of-state Negro students who seemingly were not too enthusiastic about the process. This feeling was somewhat heightened by the action of the West Virginia Board of Education in increasing the out-of-state tuition from $200 per year to $350. This decision threatened for a time to produce a difficult situation on the campus since many of the out-of-state Negroes felt that this was a direct blow at them designed to reduce the Negro enrollment so that the college could be taken over by the white students. Quick action and honest explanation aided in calming the feelings which were the result of the fears produced.

Some students complained that the college was bending over backward to welcome white students and to see that they were successful in their courses. When it became evident that there was some dissatisfaction on the part of the Negro students with regard to the alleged attitudes of the staff, student leaders were invited to reveal to the faculty their views and opinions. Harmony seems to have been effected by that frank discussion.

Another problem had to do with the mixing of mature students with the ordinary students in classes. This was made necessary by that fact that the enrollment increased and we were unable to arrange separate classes for persons who were employed in industries in the Valley and who were taking courses during the evening.

These mature students were much more serious in their approach to their classes, and in many instances overshadowed the ordinary college student in accomplishment. This presented a grave problem, since the ordinary college student who was not studying very hard could have an excuse for his lack of success. However, for the most part, these situations have been worked out through counseling and guidance procedures which have been in effect at the college for some time.